

REVIEW PAPER

CREATE NOT AN EVENT FOR FANS, BUT FAN'S EVENT: MANAGERIAL ASPECTS OF SMALL-SCALE EVENTS

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Abstract

This paper argues the merits of hosting small-scale rather than large-scale sport tourism events. First, distinction between large-scale events and small-scale events will be drawn. Next, along with emphasizing potential markets for hosting small-scale sport tourism events, argument that there is a need for hosting those types of events will be introduced. Following provided arguments, the developmental issues surrounding sport tourism events will be discussed. Issues of commodification and authenticity will be explored in greater detail.

Keywords: *small-scale events, mega events, sports tourism, sports tourism customers.*

Introduction

Events are significant part of modern day leisure industry as they are organized in all industry sectors. Travel and tourism, sport and recreation, lodging, restaurant, entertainment and education sectors stage the events in order to attract visitors. Be it an exhibition, circus, high school reunion party or scouts camp, Olympic games or regional juniors swimming championship, all these events have an element of attraction that brings people together to enjoy it. Sport has been one of the main attractions of

events. Since time immemorial people were interested in sporting events. First Olympic Games were held in 776 B.C., various religious and ethnic celebrations were main attractions for people to gather in the Middle Ages. What differ today are events' periodicity, place and theme.

Rapid growth of media attention resulted in staggering growth of caliber of sporting events. As a result, mega events such as Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Super Bowl, Baseball World Series have emerged and now create spectacular bonanzas for live and TV audiences. The attention is so magnificent that event not only draws TV and social media attention, it also makes people travel to its location in order to experience it live. As a result, sports events have become large tourist attractions.

Nonetheless, sports events as tourist attraction are ever evolving and growing. As Green (2001) notes, sports events organizers, in addition to sporting spectacle, are offering enhanced activities and services. It is important to recognize as many visitors' needs as possible, thus, making an event more appealing. For example, NBA Draft has now become one of the main annual events in basketball, alongside with All-Star Game and the Playoffs. League has realized fans' and media interest in draft and from 1992 has started to host this event in different cities each year (before it was held in New York). It is now held in crowded NBA arenas, broadcasted live in prime time and draws tremendous amount of media and fan attention from all over the world (National Basketball Association, 2000).

In light of all these merits that sports events have, it is safe to say that event sport tourism is emerging and very prominent component of sport tourism development. In fact, event sport tourism is increasingly being tied up with economic activity and development plans of regional and national governance (Gibson, 2017). Although not unequivocally shared, notion of economic benefits yielding from staging sporting events is legitimate and very strong (Turco & Lim, 1998; Gratton, Dobson & Shibli, 2000).

However, an important distinction, on whether an event is spectator or participant, arises while organizing and promoting sporting event. Interestingly, according to Hinch and Higham (2004), spectator driven events tend to be elite sport (and, thus, of larger scale) events, whereas participant driven sports events are mostly non-elite and have smaller scale. A lot of research has been done on large-scale elite sport events (Hinch & Higham, 2004) but not much has been done in regard of small-scale events. Nonetheless, few authors suggest that smaller events can be particularly attractive and bring substantial benefits to host community (Green & Chalip, 1998; Hinch & Higham, 2004). Destinations, which are not able to host mega events due to capacity constraints, could and should compete for hosting smaller scale events instead. Such events can be comparatively

inexpensive to organize; nonetheless, they can attract large numbers of people to a city or region. Due to this high benefit to cost ratio, it is worthwhile examining the traits of small-scale events.

As mentioned, smaller scale events do not usually offer high quality spectacle, but rather invite people to participate and get more actively involved. This important distinction is very significant upon understanding the motivations of potential visitors. It is not only distinguishing potential customers into spectators and participants, but also realizing that participants differ amongst themselves as well. The latter distinction will also shed light on visitor motives. According to Hall (cited in Hinch & Higham, 2004), actively involved event visitors can be classified into activity participants and players. Both differ in their goals of attending the event, views and pursue of physical activity, with former having more casual attitude towards the competition itself and seeking more general fun and active leisure time, whereas the latter group of visitors is usually deeply committed to the sport and seek quality competition. As a result, every event has its own market and consumers that need to be recognized and targeted.

The objectives of this paper are to discuss main characteristics of small-scale events by parallel contrasting of mega events; to describe markets and consumers of small-scale events; and to outline the key developmental issues of small-scale events management.

Material and methods

In order to fulfill previously stated objectives a method of systematic review of the literature (Cooper, 1989) on sport tourism and related terms for managerial aspects of event organization was utilized. Using a positivism paradigm the purpose of the search was to synthesize the results of a number of studies regarding the small-scale events. The ability to provide a specific, cause-and-effect type of answer is the most advantageous use of such methodology.

The literature search was performed during the fall of 2018 using the following databases: EBSCO, SPORTdiscus, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete. Each database was searched from the earliest to the most relevant date available and the selection criteria included peer-reviewed journals, written in English, available as full-text, related to sport tourism and sport event management. Additional studies were identified using hard copies from personal libraries. The selection criteria were independently applied by all three researchers. In case of the initial disagreement, discussion of an article ensued until a consensus was reached.

Results

Characteristics of Small-Scale Events. When discussing events and event management, many authors fail to draw an important distinction between large-scale events and small-scale events. It has been done so mainly because of very subjective nature regarding this type of definition. As a result, different authors apply different criteria for events' definitions. Most commonly used phrases include Olympic Games, World Cup, World fairs fall under the category of mega-events, which are "large-scale, high-profile occurrences of limited duration intended to attract attention and visitors to a host city" (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying 2002, p. 183). However, most of them fail to specify how large or what is the capacity of the profile.

As Getz (1997, p. 6) argues, "it is really more a question of the relative significance of an event, rather than any particular measure of its size or reach." Thus, it is important to overview what constitutes to the significance of the events.

One of the main definitions of an event is the number of people involved. Mega events are usually coherent with large spectator crowds. As Getz (1997) mentions, mega means 1 million in the metric system, thus, the event has to attract one million visitors. However, it could be argued that one million visitors are way too much in order for an event to be recognized as mega event. For example, one-time event is held in a stadium, no facility could accommodate one million fans. Super Bowl is widely considered a mega event, even though it is held in front of a crowd that does not exceed one hundred thousand spectators.

Also, when speaking of number of visitors, one has to distinguish between participants and spectators. Some events are designed for participants rather than spectators. It would be hard to stage an event involving one million participants (and as a result award mega status to it), but the most popular marathons, such as Boston and New York, could easily be named mega events. As a result, number of visitors is not the only criterion for defining size of the event. Also, deciding on actual number of visitors is a subjective matter.

Another important distinction that separates large events from small ones is media attention. No mega event could go by without extensive media coverage; live broadcast is imperative as well as a large presence of media representatives. The popularity and the widespread of social media channels add another dimension to coverage of event. Social media platforms enable not only sports broadcasters, but also athletes and fans to create valuable, dynamic and interactive content, which brings more attention to the event.

Number of authors (Getz, 1997; Burbank, Andranovich & Heying 2002) stress the importance of economic impact in defining mega events. Economic impact involves series of separate issues. First, costs associated with staging of the event create significant difference between mega events and small-scale events. Mega events distinguish in multi million expenditures that start long before actual event. One of the main features is bidding process (Whitelegg, 2000). Smaller scale events do not have to commit any financial resources on bidding process, as well as on building large infrastructure. Mega events on the other hand are always associated with considerable facility constructions. Hundreds of millions of Euros for new stadiums and other sporting facilities are common features of modern day mega events.

Second, economic profit that the event generates separates mega events from small-scale events. Due to large media presence, event's significance and prestige, mega events greatly attract tourists to the area. Also, corporate sponsorship involvement is of much bigger scale in mega events.

Another significant issue regarding differences between mega events and smaller scale events is the physical presence of the event that transforms entire community. Usually large events disrupt everyday routines and embrace all local community, whereas small-scale events sometimes can pass unnoticed by some members of local community. Palmer (1998) presented the impact of Tour de France on local villages as she explained how image of the event was used by local businesses, how every village welcomed and was prepared for the race. Palmer concluded that "in every possible way, 'normal' life is suspended or displaced to accommodate the 'abnormality' of the Tour de France." (p. 268).

Sport tourism scholars (Green & Chalip, 1998; Higham, 1999) agree on growing demand for hosting small-scale events. Smaller communities that lack size and necessary infrastructure to host mega events are bound to settle for smaller scale events. However, as mentioned earlier, small-scale events do not necessarily mean less interest among visitors or more modest financial success. It is argued that cost to benefit ratio of small-scale events is very high. As Higham (1999) states that small-scale events present great opportunities for managers to perform business and avoid all the complicated issues that surround mega events. He clearly explains the advantages of small-scale events over mega events. Starting with bidding process, building infrastructure and other economic constants that carry particularly high-price tag in mega events, Higham also explains negative impacts of mega events on social life and destination image. In contrast, the organizers of small-scale events do not have to spend high amount of

financial resources on bidding process, infrastructure is usually in place and only minor renovations could be needed that will serve community after the event. Also, financial burden of hosting the event is not placed on local taxpayers. Crowding and security issues do not affect small-scale events as much. As a result, local residents will not try to leave the area in order to avoid traffic congestions and so on. Interesting point raised by Higham is related to destination image. Mega events draw so much media attention that it carries certain risks. In case event proceeds unsuccessfully or is associated with negative incidents (such as criminal accidents, terrorist attacks, etc.) because of extensive media presence, negative news will be released and area's image could be severely damaged. Small-scale events are not that broadly covered by the media and so has a lesser degree of risk of getting negative destination image.

As mentioned earlier, prestige is closely related to mega events. Due to broad media involvement and great national and international exposure, mega events are associated with destination's prestige and image creation. Also, as could be seen from the global events (social vs. capitalist regimes) of the last few decades, mega events can become tools of governments and political ideologies (Roche, 2000). In conclusion mega events could be defined through Getz' (1997) description, which was similarly reiterated by Muller (2015) and stated that large number of tourists, big media coverage, large costs and infrastructural changes define mega events.

Small-scale events, on the other hand, could be defined in sharp contrast to mega events. Modest spectator or participant crowds, smaller scale involvement of media companies and significantly lower financial investments, as well as profits accompany small-scale events. However, as will be argued further, smaller scale does not necessarily mean less opportunities or worse grounds for staging.

Sport Events Markets. Understanding potential markets is as equally important in sport tourism, as it is in other businesses. Tourist motives are likely to be multiple. As a result, one is looking at a complex web of interrelated interests and motives that need to be separately highlighted and assessed. Market segmentation represents one of the central topics which tourism researchers and practitioners have repeatedly investigated. As Hinch and Higham (2004) explain about sport tourism development markets, they provide us with a set of questions, such as 'Who are sport tourists?', 'What factors motivate sport tourists?', 'To what extent do motivations differ between distinct groups of sport tourists?', 'What travel experiences do sport tourists seek in association with the sports that they pursue at a given destination?' Upon answering these questions, one will be able to identify appropriate market segments and target them. As can be seen, the most

important object here is to know your customers and, more importantly, to understand what motivates them to come and attend particular event. Crompton and McKay (1997) extensively studied the motives of visitors who attend festival events. According to them, understanding visitor motivations is important for three reasons. First, it allows organizers to make better and more focused offers to potential customers. Also, it helps to better satisfy customers' needs. Finally, knowing what motivates visitors to attend one event or another helps to better understand customers' decision-making process.

As Hinch and Higham (2004) explain, upon segmenting sport tourism markets it is necessary to define the demand groups among your clients. For example, Maier and Weber (cited in Hinch & Higham, 2004) identify demand groups based on the level of intensity that visitors engage themselves into the sporting activity. Therefore, all four groups (from top performance athletes to passive sports tourists) are interested in sports events, nevertheless in different ones. Top performance athletes will seek for a high quality competition, occasional sportsmen will combine sporting activities with cultural sightseeing or other interesting things to do, and passive sports tourists will be mostly concerned with watching sports events. It is crucial for event organizers to identify their target group in order to make their event as much appealing.

Reeves' (cited in Hinch & Higham, 2004) classification of sports tourists is based on participation, non-participation, decision-making, and lifestyle. The latter is particularly important as it shows significance of particular event to someone's life. Events such as biker shows or marathons carry distinct cultures with them that many people identify themselves with. As will be seen later, cultural implications and identity are very significant parts of sports events, especially of smaller scale ones.

Thus, understanding the motivations that visitors hold towards their chosen sports or events is critical in staging sport tourism events. By knowing what motivates sport tourists, organizers will be able to define appropriate markets that their event is aiming at.

Understanding motivation is particularly important for small-scale events. Most of those events draw visitors from relatively close areas and, thus, are dependent on the revisiting people. Capitalizing on satisfying the needs of those customers will ensure their return. For example, Fyall, Callod & Edwards (2003) state that there are types of tourists who, in contrast to novelty seeking, are more likely to return to previously visited places.

Small-scale events and specifications of their visitors. Based on Hinch and Higham (2004) classification, sport tourism markets can be distinguished into active participation, event and nostalgia. However, such

market segmentation often overlaps as sport tourism often encompasses more than one market. Small-scale event can be seen not only in the context of event markets, but also in the context of active sport tourism markets (if it involves active participation), as well as nostalgia sport tourism (if it demonstrates parallels with cultural heritage).

Studies have shown (Green & Chalip, 1998; Green 2001) that oftentimes place or competition does not constitute fundamental attraction of the event. Events that carry distinct culture, which visitors identify with, are highly successful because of this bondage. As a result, Green (2001) suggests that event organizers should leverage this subculture and identity while promoting and staging event. Sports that have distinct culture (football) or highly specific movements, like bikers', bring more meaningfulness to event and its visitors, if properly organized. As Green concludes, not fostering this event augmentation can prove damaging to events' future success. For example, when fans were forbidden to make their half-time dance show and cheering, their interest in tournament has dropped (Green, 2001). In addition Green and Chalip (1998, p. 286) conclude, "the fundamental attraction is neither the place nor its people; the fundamental attraction is the other players who attend. The event itself is more important than the destination." The key concept for small-scale event organizers to recognize is the significance of distinct cultural value.

One of the potential groups that is in great demand of small-scale events are children, seniors, and disabled. Members of these market segments will never be able to attract large audiences, however, they do want to participate and have events. Masters games always attract great crowds of participants (Nike World Masters Games, 1998). And these visitors are very important, since most of them are retired people who are looking for attractions and traveling opportunities. Also, children like to participate in sports, while various tournaments are held to decide high school or junior club champions. More importantly, children will always be accompanied by their parents, which greatly increase the number of visitors. Event organizers have to bear this in mind and provide assisting visitors with additional amusements. Similarly approached should be events for disabled people. They are also surrounded by numbers of assisting people. With Paralympic movement gaining lots of attention and popularity, disabled physical activities have become very important and wide spread. As a result, there is great number of specific customer groups that are in need of sporting events that simply do not have to be large-scale.

Lastly, there are certain events (biker shows, field hockey) that carry certain cultural identities. People that are attached to this culture will attend those events and participation number might get very high. As was

mentioned before, such events represent lifestyle of most of their visitors. Iso-Ahola (cited in Hinch & Higham, 2004) explain that tourists seek to escape from their everyday lives. Example from Green and Chalip (1998) show that women in Flag football tournament were fascinated with an opportunity to play tough and rough game, be less feminine, and so on. White and White (2004) research showed that long-term journeyers choose to travel through Australian Outback because they, unlike in Europe, can get off the road anywhere and feel as 'a bunch of cowboys'.

As can be seen, large markets are available for small-scale event organizers. More importantly, there is a need from consumers for those types of events. Managers have to carefully assess the needs of customers and design an event to satisfy them. Small-scale event organizers have to target regular and dedicated sports tourist if the event involves active participation. Also, cultural issues have to be distinct, as well as traditions, family involvement that brings nostalgic feelings amongst participants.

Discussion

The present study showed several key issues regarding the development of sport tourism and events. Questions concerned about finding the right balance between commercialization and authenticity arose, especially within contemporary context of globalization. Hinch and Higham (2004) stress the need for strategic alliances and partnerships, while taking into consideration social, economic and environmental goals. The issue of such balance has been agreed upon and developed in terms of policy recommendations by the expert group on "Economic dimension of sport" (Recommendations ..., 2016). We believe that in the context of small-scale events these same issues have to be addressed adequately.

As a result, planning of small-scale events needs to involve the assessment of commodification and authenticity, which refer to authentic nature of attraction. Some argue (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003) that things lose their authenticity upon becoming commercialized. As a result, tourism could be seen as selling not real but 'staged' authenticity. Both globalization and partnership creation do not affect small-scale events as much as they do mega events. Mostly because of significantly smaller size of the event, its organizers do not have to be concerned with such complicated issues as large crowds of visitors with different cultural backgrounds, and all of them having different tastes and needs. Also, security concerns for small-scale events are not as demanding. Since mega-events involve participants from many countries (sometimes not the most friendly to each other), terrorist attacks have become an immense issue. Small-scale events do not have to

deal with so many contrasting issues. The main goal for small-scale events is to foster their distinct culture and bring together people that share it.

In this regard, small-scale events, especially those with distinct culture and participation attractions, could be seen as defying globalization. Those events and their 'own' unique culture are the keys to bringing participants together. It could be said that sport subcultures represent some form of 'counter culture'. As mentioned earlier, its members deliberately seek to distance themselves from the mainstream norms and practices of society. Tourists seek to escape everyday life and are looking for both authentic objects and authentic experiences. This is where events, and more importantly smaller scale events, have the advantage. As Chhabra, Healy and Sills (2003, p. 705) explain, "an authentic experience involves participation in a collective ritual, where strangers get together in a cultural production to share a feeling of closeness or solidarity." Here, we argue that sporting event, regardless of the attendee nature, will always be authentic. After all every sporting activity or spectacle inherently features uncertainty of the outcome, which provides unique and special aspect.

Lastly, it is worth drawing attention to the issues of strategic alliances and partnership. We believe that the importance of cooperative efforts is not as evident during small-scale events as it is during mega events. In their article on relationship marketing, Fyall, Callod and Edwards (2003) focused on long-term customer retention. They concluded that "relationship marketing is not a phenomenon that can be confined to one or two departments of an organization. The entire organization must be coordinated and must cooperate if the goals set are to be achieved" (p. 655). But with less traveling associated with small-scale events, less participants involved and so on, it is possible for one or few organizations to host an event rather than incorporate many different organizations.

As a result, it could be argued that organizers of small-scale events have to be more concerned with authenticity of the event rather than commercialization. Cultural distinction carries several advantageous merits that could be successfully leveraged. First, it offers distinct quality in terms of marketing and promotion of the event. Second, while already attending the event, the more visitors perceive attractions as being historical and authentic, the more they are willing to spend money.

Conclusion

Staging of small-scale events holds a significant part in sport tourism industry. Studies and practice have shown that even without great capacity, substantial financial contributions or high level athletic spectacle it is possible to stage profitable and prosperous small-scale event. The avenue to

success in staging small-scale should be paved upon studying visitors' motivations. Knowing what motivates travelers and how those motives differ among various groups of travelers, enables event organizers to create a product that best satisfies customer needs. Also, by acknowledging certain motives and targeting them event organizers can affect customer decision-making process.

Small-scale events should foster distinct culture and target specific groups that highly identify with event's cultural distinction. An opportunity for participants to escape everyday routine is one of the main traits that small-scale events offer. Also, active participation events offer physical challenges and abilities to test oneself.

By undertaking organization and development of small-scale events, organizers have to focus on authenticity of the event. Clearly authentic spectacle and experience is the main attraction for the visitors. In contrast to mega events, small-scale events involve ostensive participation from visitors. This close relationship should serve as a foundation for the organization of small-scale events.

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Submitted: April 30, 2019

Accepted: June 14, 2019

LASE JOURNAL OF SPORT SCIENCE
is a Scientific Journal published two times per year in Sport Science
LASE Journal for sport scientists and sport experts/specialists

Published and financially supported by
the Latvian Academy of Sport Education in Riga, Latvia

p-ISSN: 1691-7669
e-ISSN: 1691-9912
ISO 3297

Language: English
Indexed in Index Copernicus Evaluation
ERIH PLUS
De Gruyter Open
DOI (Digital Object Identifiers)
Printed in 100 copies

Executive Editor:
Inta Bula – Biteniece
Language Editor:
Ieva Rudzinska

Printed and bound: "Printspot" Ltd.
Cover projects: Uve Švāģers - Griezis
Address: 14-36 Salnas Street
Riga, LV1021, Latvia
Phone: +371 26365500
e-mail: info@printspot.lv
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Editorial Contact Information,
Publisher Contact Information:
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